The Inquisition in Eighteenth-Century New Mexico

Richard E. Greenleaf

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Mexico Historical Review by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu, Isloane@salud.unm.edu, sarahrk@unm.edu.
Prior to 1569 there were no tribunals of the Inquisition in the Spanish colonies. In the absence of inquisitors the responsibility to punish heresy and proscribed conduct rested with bishops or their delegates. The bishop in his role as ecclesiastical judge ordinary had been charged with preserving orthodoxy within his diocese since medieval times—before the formal establishment of the Inquisition. In early colonial Mexico in areas where there was no resident bishop or where his see was two days’ travel away, prelates of the missionary orders were given special faculties to exercise quasi-episcopal powers including the right to perform as ordinaries. After King Philip II established a tribunal of the Inquisition in Mexico in 1569, the bishops and prelates relinquished their early powers over heresy and immoral conduct, except in the remote periphery of New Spain, which came to include the kingdom of New Mexico.¹

France Vinton Scholes in his magisterial volumes on the first century of the colony has documented the activities of Inquisition commissaries from 1613 onward.² It was the custom of the Inquisition tribunal in Mexico City to appoint the ranking official of the Franciscan Order in New Mexico as commissary of the Holy Office. These prelates, known as custodians, often used their jurisdiction over heresy as a political weapon. The history of New Mexico in the seventeenth century is one of church and state conflict, a fundamental clash between missionary and economic motives of empire. The Franciscan Order used its inquisitorial powers to discipline New Mexico governors who thwarted the missionary effort. Reciprocal charges of friars and colonists against each other stemmed
from the desire of each to colonize the Indian populations for different purposes.

The easiest way to depose a governor or an obstreperous soldier was to accuse him of heretical or immoral conduct. The political establishment counterattacked the clergy with accusations of worldliness, immorality, and exploitation of their native charges. For seven decades the conflict continued filling the Inquisition archive in Mexico City with important but often biased data on the social and political fabric of the colony. So intense was the hiatus between the civil power and the clergy that Spaniards were unable to cope with the great rebellion of the Pueblo Indians in 1680, and the New Mexico colony had to be abandoned for more than a decade. If the open rivalry of clergy and government gave the natives an opportunity to rebel for political and economic grievances, the attempted forced acculturation of the Pueblo Indians by the clergy exacerbated the situation. Inquisitorial investigations of paganism, idolatry, and religious syncretism in New Mexico were carried on by the Franciscan commissaries. The prohibition of native dances and ceremonials tended to intensify the natural resentment of the conquerors.³

In light of the disastrous consequences of the church-state struggle that culminated in the Pueblo Rebellion, it is surprising that the pattern of holy office-civil government conflict surfaced again during the reconquest. In 1699, Fray Joseph García Marín, OFM, caused the Mexican tribunal to initiate proceedings against the governor and captain general of New Mexico Pedro Rodríguez Cubero.⁴ García Marín claimed the governor had accused him of having solicited women in the confessional and having preached heretical sermons. "He censured me with very ill tempered language which reeked of heresy," especially in criticizing García Marín's views on the sacraments of penance, confession, and baptism, or so the friar charged. The governor had collected his testimony from settlers of the El Paso area where García Marín was serving at the time. No action was taken by the Holy Office in this case—perhaps because the Franciscan commissaries were waiting to amass more evidence against the governor.

It appears, however, that the order was anxious to heal relations with governors as the Reconquest colony took form. In 1698 the
tribunal of The Holy Office appointed three Franciscan commis-
saries in New Mexico. Fray Juan de Zavaleta was to serve in El
Paso, Fray Juan Álvarez in Santa Fe, and Fray Antonio de Obregón
in the missions with headquarters in Zia. Zavaleta was recalled to
Mexico City in May of 1705, leaving Inquisition affairs among the
colonists to Fray Juan Álvarez who got along quite well with civil
authority. Commissary Álvarez made certain that Edicts of Faith
were proclaimed throughout the colony, and when appropriate he
conducted investigations of proscribed conduct. The year 1706 saw
a rebirth of inquisitorial activity in the Spanish pueblos as Álvarez
tried to upgrade the moral fiber of the colonists. From Nambe on
2 May 1706 the commissary reported on his pastoral visitation of
his Spanish charges. He told the Mexico City tribunal that he had
the cooperation of Governor Francisco Cuervo y Valdés in his visita,
but he asked his superiors to issue him specific instructions on how
to proceed because “in New Mexico there were many spiritual
abuses” originating in the folk religion of both mixed bloods and
Spaniards. They employed sorceries, incantations, and medical
remedies obtained from the recently converted Indians. Álvarez
was also concerned about recurrent paganism in the missions, and
he ordered the Franciscan preachers to warn the tribes not to
return to their former beliefs.

Commissary Álvarez fixed his attention on the religion of the
mestizos (mixed bloods) whom he regarded with grave suspicion.
Technically of course his inquisitorial jurisdiction did not include
power to discipline native transgressions against the faith since pure
Indians were subject to the missionaries under a different set of
rules and regulations. Fascinating pictures of religious syncretism
among both mestizos and lower class Europeans emerge from the
Álvarez investigations in 1706. He gathered a considerable amount
of testimony in Santa Fe against the mulatto wife of Agustín de la
Cruz of Zacatecas, one María de Ancissu who prescribed love po-
tions to her group of friends. She had Simona de la Vega put soil
from a graveyard under a pair of scissors arranged in the form of
a cross in a shoe. She then placed it under her husband’s bed so
that he would fall asleep and not awaken when Simona “went out,”
presumably to see a lover or to do other things of which her spouse
might not approve. Simona Bonifacio, wife of Pedro Seguro, a
mulatto soldier, told Álvarez that Ancissu's husband was either a mestizo or Indian. María had taught her how to enchant a man by washing her private parts and using the water to cook with or make chocolate for him. The recipe also included use of lizard blood, and just to make sure, she was to bury charms, probably for sale by María, in the place where the man habitually urinated! So much for frontier aphrodisiacs.

Names of Fray Juan's sorceresses were interesting. One called "La Chispa" advised María de Castro, Spanish wife of a philandering sergeant of the presidio, how to keep him away from the other woman. She opined that prayer would not suffice, saying that La Conquistadora in the chapel was unable to help, "that the Saints of this territory are deaf," and that the "mother of God had not come to this land." La Chispa, whose name was María de la Encarnación, told the Spanish lady "when I ask the Devil he gives what is necessary." Two sorceresses named "La Memela" (Pancake) and "La Rana" (Frog) occupied some of Álvarez's time. They manufactured sleeping powders to keep husbands at home. One sorceress claimed to have made love to a snake.

This ring of mulattoes, mestizos, Negroes, and lower-class Spaniards often mixed Indian, African, and Spanish sorceres—and almost always blamed Indians when they were caught. Álvarez related the case of "La Lozana," also known as Juana Apodaca Pactle, who ran a school for her apprentices. She had bragged "the fathers know nothing compared to what my powers are." She mixed her incantations with frequent ejaculation of "Hallelujah, Hallelujah!," and praising the Lord helped the ceremonies along with "an herb called Pactle," probably peyote, which she claimed to have gotten from the Indians. A black drummer from the soldier's barracks testified that La Lozana told her girls to follow men and gather up the ground they had walked on if they wished to bewitch them forever. Another client related that La Lozana often employed an Indian curandero (curer) in her ceremonies. Her more prosaic remedy for relief of pain during childbirth was to put a knife under the bed to cut off the pain.

Álvarez got this view of New Mexico religion up and down the river. From El Paso he had a denunciation by a mulatto called Josepha de la Encarnación of a witch named La Naranja, wife of
Pascual Naranjo. She taught her clients to enchant using the Rosary. When Josepha was gambling—casting lots in the game they called Los Patoles—and was losing heavily, La Naranja offered her a remedy to make her a winner. She was to use a particular herb and wash her hands in urine. According to the denunciation “this took place in the house of Tiwa Indians.” La Naranja also taught how to make love potions, which she called “atoles,” and how to conceal these in the female attire. There can be no doubt that these bits of information discouraged Commissary Fray Juan Álvarez in his assessment of the moral fiber of the colony.

The Álvarez visitation of 1706 did turn up other matters of a quasipolitical nature. Zavaleta, before he returned to Mexico, left his successor records of a civil investigation of sorcery that Governor Pedro Rodríguez Cubero had started in 1703. It concerned Felipe Moraga who had been sick with eye trouble for more than a year. Moraga asked Juan the Indian carpenter from San Juan to cure him. There had been a course of seven treatments, and Juan had given him “herbs” to drink, also stuff to put in his eyes, and had conducted curing ceremonies in a cave. Moraga had related all of this to Rodríguez Cubero in the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe. The report said that “among the Indians [of this area] there are great numbers of idolaters.” Whether this was an implied criticism of the failure of the missionary program and another swipe of the governor against the Franciscans is an interesting speculation.

Álvarez did become involved in what looked like an attempt of Alfonso Rael de Aguilar, reconquest lieutenant governor, to discredit Juan de Ulibarri, procurator and regidor of the colony. On 10 March 1706 a conversation was reported to have taken place at the entrance to the presidio. Present were Ulibarri, Rael de Aguilar, Capt. Felix Martínez, and Capt. Diego Arías Quirós. A great disputation led to Ulibarri’s having said “I don’t believe it and wouldn’t believe it if Jesus Christ himself said it!” Arías accused Ulibarri of heresy, but when Álvarez investigated, Rael de Aguilar could not remember the topic of the argument; one witness said he had no recollection of the incident, “but then my memory is very fragile”; another who Arías said was there claimed it was not said in his presence!
The Inquisition records of 1706 help shed light on differences between New Mexico colonists of the seventeenth century and the social fiber of the reconquest population. Fray Juan Álvarez was obviously horrified by the problems he encountered. The bond between mixed bloods of the gente baja (lower class) and the Indians bothered him, and the folk religion that often appeared Catholic in form but that had strong overtones of paganism perplexed him. Perhaps he and his coreligious came to the conclusion over the next decade that extirpation of sorcery and superstition was an insoluble problem, probably not worth the effort. If sorceries were nonthreatening in nature the Franciscans may have felt that they were relatively harmless, and since they appeared to be noneradicable, an attitude of benign neglect set in. The population remained credulous, petty hatreds and rivalries continued, and the medical quacks flourished. The level of education on the frontier was obviously low. Most of the people who testified before Álvarez in 1706 could not sign their names to the sworn record.

Even though Indian sorcery had political overtones and had been a catalyst in the Pueblo Rebellion, the Franciscan posture on paganism became more permissive, and the missionaries allowed frontier catholicism to accommodate itself to native beliefs. The New Mexico governors in the eighteenth century criticized the friars for not vigorously extirpating idolatry and sorcery among the Indians and for their laxness with the mixed bloods. Fray Angelico Chavez has in recent times proven that a mixed blood was a major actor in fomenting the Pueblo Revolt. As a consequence civil power began to assume jurisdiction over witchcraft as early as 1708 when the first Santa Fe witches were tried, and in 1733 a series of witchcraft trials were staged in Isleta.

Perhaps out of a sense of frustration in not being able to curtail sorcery, the commissaries of the Holy Office of The Inquisition decided to attack more manageable problems, those of bigamy and sexual morality. The Franciscans thought that bigamy should be severely punished in order to set a good example for the Indian population and to deter other colonists from engaging in proscribed conduct. On 16 April 1717 Commissary Fray Juan de Tagle began a celebrated bigamy investigation. Agustín del Rio, alias de La Palma, resident of Casas Grandes near the Tanos mission, was
accused of being a bigamist in litigation that lasted almost eight months. At the end he stood convicted and on 28 December 1717 was forced to abjure his sins in public ceremonies, which most of the citizenry attended. Trials for bigamy were staged with regularity. In 1734 Juan García de la Mora Gachupín was forced to prove that his first wife had died before his second marriage. Mixed bloods as well as Spaniards were tried as in the cases of Joseph Antonio Díaz, “El Chulito” (The Cute One) in El Paso in 1734, and Agustín Miguel de Estrada, “El Lobo” (The Wolf) in 1736.

Commissary Tagle felt that he could not countenance sexual immorality among his Franciscan clergy. He had to take action against Fray Francisco Bretons, priest of San Ildefonso, when Petronilla de la Cueva denounced him for soliciting sex from her in the confessional. De la Cueva was the wife of Juan de Chávez of Albuquerque. Bretons had evidence that she was a sorceress, and the incomplete record implies that he offered to let her off if she would go to bed with him. Her denunciation might have been malicious. In any event as the trial dragged on in 1712 and 1713, Bretons died leaving the case moot. It seems that Fray Pedro Díaz de Aguilar, OFM, was investigated and ultimately reassigned in 1737 after he had been denounced as a solicitante. One of the most frequent heretical ideas investigated during New Mexico’s colonial history was that simple fornication—that is between two unmarried parties—was not a mortal sin. The probe of 1751 into the private life of a Spaniard, Francisco Arias, was typical.

One of the most famous New Mexico Inquisition cases in the early eighteenth century began in Isleta in May of 1729 when Fray Pedro Montaño, resident minister in the Mission of San Agustín de Isleta, denounced a member of his congregation as a notorious blasphemer and reprobate. Pedro de Chávez, a wealthy settler in the area, was an irreverent and mocking man. Fray Pedro referred to Chávez’s blasphemies, some of them bordering on heresy, and scandalous conduct that set a bad example for Spaniards and Indians alike. Chávez had made fun of a religious procession (The Holy Way of The Cross) on the Bernalillo road, and when Montaño had administered the sacraments in Albuquerque on Ash Wednesday,
Insignia of the Inquisition.
everyone except Chávez had come to get their ashes on the forehead. He had ridiculed a woman who took the habit of the Third Order, jesting and referring to it as “that little sack.” As his pastor, Montaño complained that Pedro refused to take his hat off or kneel during mass. He disrupted the mass, chatting away, leaving before it was finished. When Fray Pedro read aloud from holy works, Chávez told the Indians that he too had books that were not so boring.

Other charges more serious were brought against Pedro de Chávez by Montaño. When Chávez heard that Our Lord died for us in order to open the path to heaven, he inquired “where is the stairway to Heaven? The Sandía Mountains seem to be as close as you can get.” He also proclaimed loudly that it is bunk to believe that by giving alms one will go to heaven. Montaño related that Chávez had a Christian Apache in his household whom he wished to mate with an Indian maiden, and he forced her to do so against her will. The padre also charged Chávez with grave-robbing so that he could sell the shrouds of those buried.

Apparently Pedro de Chávez had a very “healthy” sexual appetite. He took liberties with Indian women of his household who complained to the priest. Avowing that simple fornication was not a sin, he also committed incest with two sisters. Juan González, the alcalde mayor of the Isleta area, confirmed Montaño’s charges against Chávez whom he said was a public disgrace. María, an Indian servant of Chávez, complained that he forced her to give sexual favors in order to protect her young sister from him. After all of this Fray Pedro said Chávez never came to confession. Indeed he called the priest very uncomplimentary names. By December 1729 the commissary had sent all of the Chávez documentation to the Holy Office tribunal in Mexico City. There the matter languished while the Inquisition attorney studied the record.

The attorney found procedural irregularities in the trial record and also determined that the nature of Chávez’s misdemeanors was civil and religious. The tribunal decided to give Pedro de Chávez a severe reprimand, exhorting him to mend his ways and to behave like a good Christian, else he would be brought to trial by the Holy Office and the civil authorities. A formulary for the reprimand was drawn up in El Paso to be read to Chávez in the presence of a
notary. The new Custos Andrés de Varo was to deliver it personally. Here the record ends, and the Chávez case faded into obscurity. Perhaps it was obscured by the witchcraft trials of Indians in Isleta in 1733 that the civil government was conducting at the time, minimizing Chávez's crimes in comparison.

By far the most interesting Inquisition dossier of eighteenth-century New Mexico was that of Miguel de Quintana, the "Mad Poet" of Santa Cruz de la Cañada who was denounced for heresy to the Holy Office on 17 March 1732. Born and educated in Mexico City, Quintana came to New Mexico with Governor Diego de Vargas in 1693, and with his young wife settled in the new villa of Santa Cruz. Literate in a society of illiterates he became a scribe for the alcaldes and court reporter in land disputes and criminal proceedings. He also composed verses and dramas for special occasions. Fray Angelico Chavez who has studied the poetry of Quintana as well as the Inquisition proceedings thinks that he was "poet laureate" of the villa and the possible author of the famous Los Pastores of New Mexico folk literature. Quintana was over sixty years of age when his Inquisition investigation began, a process that was to last five years.

Miguel de Quintana underwent a personality change in the early 1730s and developed what Chavez calls a fixation with moral scrupulosity, a hypochondria of the soul. He felt sinful without being a bona fide sinner, and he expressed his agonies and doubts in his poetry that he often shared with Fray Juan de la Cruz, his friend and confessor. The confessor thought that Quintana had a "bruised conscience" and that Miguel's writing was good therapy, a way to relieve his anguish. His almost pathological fear of sin kept him away from confession, and he could not bear the usual clerical homilies on hellfire and damnation. He apparently had visions and ecstasies and wrote about them to Fray Juan de la Cruz. Some of his verses were given to the priest at Santa Cruz who denounced him to the commissary of the Holy Office in Santa Fe. Father Manuel de Sopena and the Inquisition notary Fray José Irigoyen questioned Quintana's mental stability. The tribunal of the Holy Office in Mexico City examined the denunciations and wondered if Quintana were sane; it instructed the Santa Fe commissary to gather more information.
Both Sopena and Irigoyen again testified against Quintana in November 1734 and accused him of doctrinal error. Finally the accused himself had to go to Santa Fe to appear before the commissary. He wept during the questioning and related his anguish about being sinful. The Holy Office finally prohibited Miguel de Quintana from sharing his verses with anyone else. But he continued to write and to send the poetry to Fray Juan de la Cruz for his commentaries. In April 1737 the new priest at Santa Cruz intercepted a group of Quintana's stanzas, poetry that poked fun at the unctuous clergy and the Holy Office. And again Quintana was denounced! No action was taken against the poet who lived for another decade until he died at Santa Cruz in April of 1748. Recently Clark Colahan and Francisco Lomelí have transcribed all of Miguel de Quintana's poetry and have placed it and the Inquisition trial within the context of Spanish mysticism, specifically the thought and writing of Miguel de Molinos.23 Certainly Quintana might have been connected with the circle of Alumbrados (Illuminists) in Mexico City and Puebla who flourished there while Miguel was a student and before he joined the Vargas reconquest venture.24 Chavez remarks that Quintana's fixations were similar to those of Martin Luther and that perhaps Quintana was a Lutheran without knowing it.25 Miguel de Quintana had the misfortune to have had his thoughts, actions, and writings interpreted by inexperienced and perhaps stuffily self-righteous clergy.

Groups of Albuquerque denunciations of the pecadillos of inhabitants in the years 1734 to 1737 show the gossiping nature of the settlers and shed some light on colonial mentality.26 In April 1734 the Franciscan Fray Pedro Antonio Esquer of Pecos mission deposed in Albuquerque that while traveling from El Paso to the Rio Arriba he had stopped over at La Ranchería where a civil proceeding was in progress between José Reaño, a Santa Fe merchant, and Vicente Armijo. Reaño had rashly said that excommunication was a meaningless act—and Esquer thought Commissary Joseph Antonio Guerrero ought to know about it. Salvador Martínez Collado, a sheepherder, denounced Francisco Padilla of Albuquerque who had a very slow horse and upon advice from the Indians of Senecú he had smeared the animal with peyote (pellote)
to keep it from becoming tired. Francisca Rael de Aguilar denounced her friend Gertrudis Durán de Armijo for saying "it's better to be a concubine than to be properly married." Salvador Martínez of Albuquerque felt it necessary to tattle on Antonia Baca, wife of Antonio Chávez, for having killed a hog in Jémez, removing its brains and saying that the brains could be used to make men crazy with love for the cook.

Sometimes the gossip was more malicious. In June 1737, Juan González Bas, resident in Albuquerque and rancher from Alameda, told the commissary that Francisco Padilla swore he would sell his soul to the devil in order to become alcalde of the area. Tomás Nuñez kept Gertrudis Sánchez of Chimayó from being admitted to the Third Order of Franciscans because he claimed she had practiced witchcraft. Considerable gossip about the morals of the clergy circulated around the campfires and in the ranches where this friar and that friar was accused of soliciting women in the confessional. Charges were frequently made that political enemies or economic rivals had fled to New Mexico because they were wanted by the law, had left families behind, and were now bigamists. Thus the New Mexico Inquisition archive began to take on the appearance of a police blotter by the 1740s.

Because the friars and the commissaries of the Holy Office were largely unable to regenerate the superstition-ridden Spanish population and in light of their disappointing progress with Christianized Indians in the missions, they may have developed a "fortress mentality." Blame for the sad state of the colony was affixed to the incursions of Indios Bárbaros (uncivilized Indians) who were raiding the east and west flanks of New Mexico settlements. The Santa Fe commissary was eager to show the tribunal of the Holy Office in Mexico City the dimensions of the problem as well as to document the fact that New Mexico was not unique; and Jesuits as well as Franciscans had their problems in spiritual conquest of the frontier.

Information had flowed into Santa Fe about the deplorable condition of the Tarahumara missions and was forwarded from 1735 to 1740. Since Jesuits often criticized the OFM for laxness a counterattack seemed to be in the making. Information about the scandalous conduct of Father Cristóbal Lauria was included. Lauria had
been derelict in posting Holy Office edicts in the Tarahumara missions for over a decade, and the area—it was charged—was rife with Indian sorcery. Bishop Benito Crespo in Durango had been informed of Lauria’s transgressions against the faith, and, the commissary said, had done nothing. Lauria, he inferred, was not only a blasphemer but a homosexual who often kissed and embraced men saying “it’s the custom where I come from.” He had insisted that women perform public foot-washing ceremonies in church and in his home. He never took confessions, rarely preached, and was considered to be lax on bigamy and concubinage among his flock.

The Mexican Inquisition put pressure on the viceregal military in 1747 to wage an all-out campaign against the pagan Indians in the northern areas of Chihuahua and Sonora and to contain the Gilas, Apaches, and their allies. The Holy Office itself was vested with power to prosecute Frenchmen who were invading the eastern fringes of the kingdom. The commissaries were to arrest and discipline Frenchmen who incited Indians to raid New Mexico settlements. In April 1749 Fray Juan Sanz de Leraún, OFM, notary of Holy Office in New Mexico, wrote a report to the Mexico City tribunal on the state of the colony. He denounced the illicit trade carried on by the settlers with Plains Indians, especially trade in Cibola hides and chamois. He charged that the settlers, with knowledge of the civil authority, gave the Indians horses, knives, lances, hatchets, and other instruments of warfare. This trade, he said, was a violation of church precepts, which prohibited trade with enemies of the faith. The report claimed that illicit commerce indirectly caused massacres at Pecos and Galisteo when the Comanches raided. The Comanche had superior forces of horsemen because of their French allies. Sanz de Leraún detailed the Ute raids on Abiquiú and Ojo Caliente, claiming that villages were dying of fear, their farms and cattle lost. The implication was clear: civil authority as well as the church shared the blame for deficiencies in the Christianization process.

For their part the commissaries of the Holy Office began a renewed campaign against superstition among the non-Indians especially where it appeared that sorcery, witchcraft, and proscribed conduct of mixed bloods were related to relapsed Christianized
natives or the Indios Bárbaros. The commissary looked into a curious case in San Antonio de Isleta, Paso del Norte district in 1748. The Reverend Father Juan Miguel Menchero had baptized a "wild Indian" and then, so the denunciation said, had allowed him to commit incest with two mestizo women. Groups of female sorcerers and curers were also investigated in the El Paso area after 1745 because it was feared that there was florescence of native beliefs there. In Spanish settlements friars began to police the folk music of settlers and their Indian neighbors. A report came from Albuquerque in 1752 about the scandalous dances that were being held in which both colonists and Indians participated.

Political rivalries and vicious in-fighting among the Franciscans tended to weaken their position by mid-eighteenth century and to leave them unable to prevent incursions into the religious administration of the custody by New Mexico governors and secular bishops from Durango. Reciprocal allegations of moral turpitude by Franciscan friars, custodians, and Inquisition commissaries led to a backwash of bitterness and litigation. Gustav Henningsen in his studies of the various Inquisition tribunals in the Spanish Empire alleged that often the troublemakers and morally deficient clergy were sent to the new world. Whether the recidivists and extreme offenders among the friars and priests were sent to the northern frontier is something often speculated about. Certainly there were some of these men in New Mexico. The overall picture was probably one of a dedicated but disillusioned religious establishment understaffed and ill-prepared to cope with the problems it faced.

The clergy were charged to police the moral fiber of the colony and to set a good example for their constituents. The Inquisition commissaries were charged with disciplining clerical immorality. Newly arrived commissaries often deplored the moral state of parishioners and some members of the clergy. When commissaries were named from within the ranks of the New Mexico Franciscans they often adopted a posture of benign neglect or tolerance of transgressions of colleagues or wards. Such was the case with friars' sexual mores. But when in-house controversies developed, the Franciscans were not above hurling accusations at one another, thereby providing a body of criticism that could be used against them by civil governors and Mexican bishops who wished to assert
episcopal authority over the missions. These “administrative records” of the order were filed in the Inquisition archive in Mexico City.

The internal struggles started in 1743 when Fray Pedro Montano was made commissary in Santa Fe, followed in 1747 by the appointment of Fray Andrés Varo as commissary in El Paso. The two men were political rivals within the order and vied for expanded control. The next year two equally ambitious and frequently contentious friars were appointed notaries of the Holy Office, Fray Agustín de Iniestra and Fray Juan Sanz de Lezaúin. By 1750 Varo had been elevated to custodian of the kingdom and the trouble began. Montano as commissary had refused to move against Governor Tomás Vélez Cachupín in 1749. The governor was a severe critic of the order, and the knee-jerk reaction of the more strident friars was to use the Inquisition against him. When Vice-Custos Manuel de San Juan Nepomuceno y Trigo demanded that the commissary expel Vélez Cachupín from the colony, Montano ordered him into seclusion in the convent. Custodian Varo was just as strident and blamed Montano for not taking action.

Both the custos and his second in command set out to thwart Montano in his portfolio as commissary. Montano complained to the tribunal in Mexico City that they gave him no respect and that they enlisted notaries Iniestra and Sanz de Lezaúin against him. Montano demanded the right to name two new notaries with whom he could work in harmony and peace. He was able to get Fray Juan Miguel Menchero named by 1752. Clearly, the vice-custos was scheming to get Montano transferred to Mexico City. Open warfare between the two men ensued while Notary Iniestra took a very partisan stance against his commissary. Montano used his privileges and immunities as commissary of the Holy Office of the Inquisition to keep them from virtually deporting him in 1750, and he retaliated against Nepomuceno y Trigo by hailing him up on charges for having violated the seal of the confessional. He got a witness in September 1751 to substantiate the charge.

During 1751 and 1752 Commissary Montano subjected errant Notary Fray Agustín de Iniestra to a searching investigation of his private life. He produced testimony and witnesses to Iniestra’s depravity. Jacinto Gutiérrez in Sandía Pueblo swore that Iniestra
tried to recruit him to murder Pedro de Varela so that Iniestra could continue a sexual liaison with Pedro's wife. He promised that Gutiérrez would not be punished for the killing. When Gutiérrez refused, the priest hired two Indians from Santa Ana and Cochiti to poison Varela. A venomous plant from Pecos was to be cooked in a stew. Casilda González, the wife, was a sorceress as well as Iniestra's mistress. Apparently he gave her absolution in exchange for sexual favors. The priest also had a liaison with Catarina Gutiérrez, cook of Varela's household, who refused to put the poison in the stew. She swore that Iniesta was her confessor and that she had conceived his children whom he personally baptized. He beat her severely at times—almost to the point of death on one occasion. He was also a sodomite! Other women of his acquaintance said he often affirmed that the best marriages are arranged by the devil, and women ought to betray their husbands. Montaño got several Indians to testify against Iniesta—particularly the ones he had bribed to kill Pedro de Varela. All of these records Commissary Pedro de Montaño sent to Mexico City on 5 April 1752.

The commissary then turned his attention to the conduct of Fray José Irigoyen, a companion of Custos Andrés Varo who had accompanied him north from El Paso and currently was serving as priest in Albuquerque. On 14 November 1751 Montaño began his dossier. It seemed that Irigoyen had neglected to read or post the edicts of the Inquisition, especially those concerning solicitantes. Montaño said this action was because Irigoyen solicited women in the confessional, and most ladies did not choose to go to confession with him. He was also charged with violating the seal of the confessional and revealing what the women had told him in confidence. Irigoyen was also accused of refusing to baptize three children in the villa of Albuquerque because their parents were unable to pay. Montaño alluded to Irigoyen's mistresses and said he was so busy with these women that he did not have time to hear confessions or to administer last rites to the dying.

On 28 October 1751 Montaño issued the order to remove Irigoyen from his Albuquerque parish. Irigoyen in turn accused the commissary of living with several women; and so the slanders went on and on. Fray José Irigoyen refused to recognize the jurisdiction of Commissary Montaño. He appealed to his friend Custos Varo,
and they began to collect testimony to counteract Montaño's evidence. Flurries of letters from both sides were dispatched to Mexico City. On 21 February 1752 Irigoyen petitioned the tribunal to restore him to office. The tribunal decided that Irigoyen might be a reprobate but was not a heretic. They decided Montaño had overstepped his authority. Therefore Irigoyen was returned to Albuquerque. Obviously Custos Varo had protected his protege; and the tribunal removed his enemy Montaño as commissary on 28 April 1752. Thus this particular fracas ended, but in the end all of the Franciscans lost prestige at a time they needed to present a united front.

Trouble between the order and the bishops of Durango had been brewing in earnest since Benito Crespo's episcopacy in 1730. Eleanor B. Adams has made a detailed study of the Durango prelates' attempts to extend their jurisdiction over the kingdom of New Mexico. Unfortunately the Franciscan commissaries of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in New Mexico could do little to retard the process of secularization of the missions. The arguments pro and con over whether the missionary clergy should be replaced by secular priests suffragan to the bishop of Durango raged for decades, and as Professor Adams has indicated:

Bulky reports on conditions in New Mexico and its missions were made in the interests of opposing groups. In general, whatever the allegiance of the particular writer, these leave us with a deplorable picture of the state of affairs there in the eighteenth century.

In order to assert his authority Bishop Benito Crespo made an episcopal visitation of New Mexico in 1730 despite the obstruction and resistance of the Franciscan Custos Andrés Varo. The bishop succeeded in appointment of the first secular priest Santiago Roybal as his vicar and ecclesiastical judge ordinary in Santa Fe. The regular-secular disputations reached a crisis in 1749 just as the fraternal split between Custos Varo and Commissary Montaño was developing.

In assessing the sad state of the missionary effort at mid-century reported by Bishop Crespo, Dr. Adams concluded:

It would be hard to deny that in some cases the friars were not
exerting themselves unduly in promoting the spiritual welfare of their charges. The curious failure of the New Mexico Franciscans to master the native languages is hard to understand in comparison with the brilliant success of their brethren in other parts of the New World in the fields of linguistics and ethnology. It is true that they had to deal with several languages and a number of different tribes within a single area. It is also true that inside the province interests often dictated criticism of the friars, and in the world beyond there was scarcely any real comprehension of the problems they faced and the inadequacy of their numbers and equipment to cope with them.

The wonder is that so many of them refused to succumb to discouragement and with selfless fervor made herculean efforts to carry on their evangelical tasks in the face of overwhelming obstacles. Still, some of their own visitors and brethren were forced at times to make criticisms not unlike those of their opponents.  

Both Visitor Bishop Tamarón in 1760 and the Franciscan Visitor Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez in 1776 confirmed these impressions.  

The order, beset with internecine struggle and threat of secularization, also had to face an increasingly hostile civil government from 1750 to the end of the century. Two-term Governor Tomás Vélez Cachupín (1749–54, 1760–64), relative of the Mexican viceroy, was a severe critic who invaded religious jurisdictions when he deemed it opportune to do so. The interim Governor Francisco Marín del Valle (1754–60) was equally difficult. The Franciscans charged that Vélez Cachupín was a "declared enemy of the Custody" and accused him and other governors of collecting tithes and misappropriating the money.

Governor Vélez Cachupín was not only concerned about the widespread practice of sorcery and witchcraft in New Mexico in the 1760s; he also wished to point out to higher authority in the civil government and the church that the Franciscan custody of New Mexico was not performing its duties. Consequently he launched a major investigation of the Spanish settlements and the missions during his second term as governor. On 31 January 1764 Vélez Cachupín called a meeting of friars from the missions, secular priest Santiago Roybal, and a Durango-appointed secular who was then serving as vicar and ecclesiastical judge in Santa Cruz de la Cañada
to review materials that the governor’s alcaldes and soldiers had collected. Several of the friars begged off, obviously fearing what was to come. The reports revealed a pattern of nativism and paganism in the missions and a pervading aura of sorcery and superstition in the Spanish settlements. The situation was particularly serious in Chimayó and Abiquiú where schools of sorcery flourished, idolatry was practiced, and “diabolic offerings” were combined with devil worshipping dances. The junta resolved to move against these towns and to destroy their ritualistic paraphernalia. Fascinating testimony was furnished by Joaquínillo, a genízaro Indian from Abiquiú, who was a product of one of the schools of sorcery. Indians from the entire kingdom were infected with pagan rituals—places, people, idols, hallucinogens, kachina dances, ceremonies from Taos to Sonora and from Zuñi to the Pecos area were described. Here were shocking pictures of native religion in syncretic compromise with Iberian catholicism.

In order to document his charges specifically, Governor Vélez Cachupín had drawn up long lists of Indians, Spaniards, and mixed bloods who practiced sorcery and witchcraft in Isleta, Sandía, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, San Juan, Abiquiú, Taos, Picuris, Nambé, Pojoaque, Tesuque, Galisteo, Jémez, La Laguna, genízaros of pueblo de Belen, Chimayó; gente de razón (that is, Spaniards) from Truchas, La Cañada, Albuquerque, Tomé, Santa Fe, Quemado, El Paso, and the presidío of Sonora. In a report to the viceregal government in Mexico City with copies to the tribunal of the Holy Office of The Inquisition, the bishopric of Durango and the provincial of the Franciscan Order in Mexico, Vélez Cachupín deplored the spiritual state of New Mexico and politely demanded that they do something. He charged that in each of the pueblos and missions mentioned a resident Franciscan preacher had done little or nothing to eradicate superstition among his flock. He laid the blame on the failure of the friars to learn the native languages and to instruct in Christianity while destroying the old beliefs. He suggested that the Holy Office and the secular and missionary prelates require their preachers to learn the languages of their charges.

When the tribunal of the Holy Office studied Governor Vélez Cachupín’s report, it demurely ducked the issue by stating that Indians were supposed to be subject to the bishop or his delegates
and not to the Inquisition. But the tribunal did instruct its notary, Joseph de Gutiérrez, to deliver copies of the report to Fray Manuel de Nájera, commissary general of the Franciscan Order in Mexico, as well as to Fray Joseph de Leysa, provincial of the province of the Santo Evangelio to which the New Mexico Franciscan custody belonged. This was done on 13 December 1764, probably to the great satisfaction of Governor Tomás Vélez Cachupín.

The historical record shows that Vélez Cachupín’s blast against the Franciscans had little or no effect except to exacerbate the hard feelings between civil power and clergy. As John L. Kessell notes, when Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez, OFM, conducted his visitation of New Mexico in 1776, much of the same conditions prevailed:

When he listed for his superiors all twenty-nine friars resident in the custody, including himself, he made no comment about thirteen who apparently were doing their job. Eight he classified as old and ill, or just ill, and one was blind. Another, he alleged, lived openly with a married woman. Two were drunks. Another was an unruly, brawling trader.

Given the multifaceted attacks on the order, the Franciscan commissaries of the Holy Office of the Inquisition had to take great care lest the Inquisition itself was accused by civil authority of being lax in enforcing clerical morality. This was especially true when the problems arose in missions in the Río Abajo closer to the bishopric of Durango. In 1772 a celebrated case of a Franciscan preacher in El Paso occurred. Fray Joseph de la Santa Cruz Pollanco was accused of soliciting sex from both women and men in the confessional. The ensuing investigation recognized the joint jurisdiction of the Holy Office with the bishop’s ordinary in Durango. Finally Santa Cruz Pollanco was found guilty, but the sentence did not specify the penalty. The provincial of the order was to punish as he saw fit. This usually meant suspension of the culprit from hearing confessions for a period of time and transfer to another post in order to avoid scandal. Whether the priest had been in this kind of trouble before and had been exiled to the frontier is interesting speculation.
Many historians think that the social and political ideas of the Enlightenment failed to reach colonial New Mexico. Two interesting cases of a quasipolitical nature did develop in the 1790s bringing to a crescendo the two-pronged conflict between the commissaries of the Holy Office of the Inquisition and the New Mexico governors, and the struggle between the Franciscan custody and the bishops of Durango. Fernando de la Concha (1787–94) was the last governor to cross swords with the Holy Office. It appears that the Franciscan commissaries bested him in a protracted investigation that lasted from 1795 to 1804. Governor de la Concha had attempted to rule the Franciscans with an iron hand, pressing upon them demands for money in the form of forced loans to finance his military establishment, and investigating their mission program in a searching inspection in 1789 that ranged from Senecú and El Paso in the south to Taos in the north. During the inspection Governor de la Concha had made many rash statements about politics and religion, most of which the commissaries heard about and reported to Mexico City. Whether the order was able to effect de la Concha's removal as governor is questionable, but they took the credit nevertheless. Probably it was his illegal trading with the French that got him into trouble with the viceregency. His francophile attitudes were played up by the Holy Office in order to add fuel to the fire, and the order pursued him with accusations even after he left the colony in 1794.

It is probable that many denunciations of de la Concha's conduct preceded the actual body of testimony in 1794 and 1795. The first guns were fired by Fray Juan María Lanuza from Chihuahua who reported to the Mexico City tribunal regarding de la Concha's sojourn in mission Tuluaca on his way south to set sail for Spain. In a 21 November 1794 report to the tribunal, Lanuza sent testimony of Fray Joseph Antonio Alcocer who had heard "many bad things about de la Concha, especially in Durango." It was alleged the bishop was building a case against him. The report contained statements that de la Concha had been removed because of his conduct as governor of New Mexico where he had committed many crimes. It was said he spoke irreverently of images of Christ and avowed "that to be living with concubines is not a sin." The body of the order's counterattack was contained in Fray
Severo Patero's testimony. Patero, whom Kessell treats in some detail in his study of Pecos, was serving in Durango in June of 1795. The Durango commissary of the Holy Office was open in divulging that Patero had been arrested in New Mexico by order of his prelate and Governor de la Concha. But he argued that Severo Patero's testimony was credible. Fray Severo had heard from New Mexico settlers that the governor and his aide-de-camp Pedro de Paris, from New Orleans, had affirmed priests in a state of sin could not consecrate the Host, and therefore there was no Real Presence in the Eucharist. "His Divine Majesty would not come down to the Host" because all New Mexico priests were sinful; ergo there could be no true sacrifice in the Mass in New Mexico. Concha said "all of the Saints are in Hell except Santa Maríá!"

Equally interesting to the Inquisition were Fray Severo Patero's statements about Governor de la Concha's afrancesado ideology. Concha had read Voltaire and quoted him frequently. He claimed to have become acquainted with Voltaire's works while he lived in Paris. He judged Voltaire to be a great man and approved of his ideas, even if he did not follow them in his daily life. He also praised Rousseau as a philosopher with a fine mind. Fray Severo Patero repeated his testimony under oath and before witnesses on 17 June 1795 and swore to its truthfulness. He also swore that he had no hatred or desire for vengeance against the governor.

In November of 1804 the Holy Office of the Inquisition reopened the de la Concha case. Perhaps it was at the urging of the Franciscan commissaries who were faced with yet another strident New Mexico governor. Because of the great distances involved, Fray Buena-ventura Merino, one of Patero's close friends now serving as curate of Santa Fe, was charged to gather additional evidence. Obviously records had been kept by the order for over a decade, and these were used as a nucleus of the new dossier. All kinds of information flowed to the surface, particularly about the Fernando de la Concha inspection tour of 1789. Concha, Pedro de Paris, and a mysterious Frenchman from New Orleans, who turned out to have been the trader and explorer Pedro Vial, were linked in an ominous way. Since Fray Severo Patero had died in 1795, Merino had to call other witnesses. Antonio José Ortiz, alcalde mayor of Santa Fe for
many years, had heard of de la Concha's denial of Transubstantiation and the Sacrifice of the Mass. It was he who linked the governor with Pedro Vial.

Another friend of Concha, Paris, and Vial was the Frenchman Domingo Labadfa who had invited them to lunch after Mass, but he had related to Ortiz they said "First we eat and then we pray." Labadfa, settler at San Juan for twelve years, was still alive in 1804. He swore that after Concha's brush with the Inquisition he tended to avoid him. Labadfa did admit at the famous luncheon they discussed the virginity of the Virgin, and Pedro de Paris affirmed "a woman who gives birth cannot be a virgin." Alcalde Ortiz knew something about Governor de la Concha's library. He did read French books, many of them in Spanish translation. He could not speculate whether the books were heretical or not or what influence they had on Concha.

It was learned that Notary Antonio Ruiz, resident of Albuquerque, had accompanied Governor de la Concha on the 1789 inspection as his secretary. At Zuni Concha accused Ruiz of being ignorant because he wiled away his time reading books written by "idle friars" in order to fool the public. Concha told Ruiz: "Saint Peter was such an uncivilized Saint that he couldn't read or write," and "the Masses said by New Mexico friars are worth about as much as what my horse might say." The testimony reveals a man who liked to browbeat Ruiz, a superior with a contentious and irascible personality. Ruiz was scandalized by Concha's views on the New Mexico priests' inability to invoke Transubstantiation. He told Concha that he truly believed what Christian doctrine taught—the bread and the wine were converted into the body and blood of Christ. Concha laughed at him.

On their stop at Isleta, Concha had asked Ruiz "What is faith?" and had berated his secretary for giving an "ignorant answer." At his home in Analco near the end of the tour the women of the household had prepared an altar with images of San Roque and San Antonio on it. They were making a novena to ask for relief from an epidemic sweeping the area. Concha had ridiculed the women, especially Ruiz's wife, jeering that "San Roque is an ugly Saint"; "Why prevail upon San Antonio?"; "What can saints do anyway?"; "Who knows if San Antonio is in Heaven or in Hell?";
“Only Santa María is in Heaven”; and he was not so sure about Saint Joseph.

Governor de la Concha liked to start arguments. When they were at his Galisteo ranch, where he raised cattle, the people talked about building a bridge across the river to San Felipe where they could hear Father Guerra say Mass. Concha said it would be better for his horse to say Mass. He also said insulting things about the Papacy. Once in Río Puerco he had asked Juan de Diós Peña if a Pope died should he be buried if it were discovered he was a heretic? If he had been buried, should he be dug up? Fray Francisco de Hozio, ex-custodian of the kingdom and now chaplain of the Santa Fe presidio, and Fray Esteban San Miguel of Tesuque mission helped Merino gather the de la Concha testimonies; and they swore to their veracity on 30 June 1805. Merino informed the Mexico City tribunal that he had not summoned the women to come in to Santa Fe to testify because of the great distance and the risk of Indian attack on them. On 18 October 1805 the tribunal decided to file all of the de la Concha information for the time being because “the proof is weak,” and it was difficult to continue the case.

What the Concha case did achieve was to cause the tribunal to tell the Franciscan commissaries in New Mexico to be more careful about how denunciations and testimonies were to be taken in the future, so that weakly constructed processes like the Concha one would not be repeated. The question of why Governor Fernando de la Concha’s trial was allowed to drag on for so long a time raises interesting speculations. Obviously the Franciscan commissaries had powerful allies and unusual sources of information within the Holy Office bureaucracy. Was the whole affair a simple attempt to strike back at any enemy? Or was the goal to intimidate de la Concha’s successor, Governor Fernando de Chacón, who was aiding and abetting the secularization of the New Mexico missions? The second case dealing with Enlightenment ideas in the 1790s may provide some clues to the answers.

The Franciscan Holy Office commissaries were able to combat the bishop of Durango when he placed an obvious “trouble-maker” as curate of Santa Fe and visitor of the New Mexico missions in 1797. Gregorio Oliden y Orquide had been in dutch with the
Inquisition in Mexico City a decade before and had obviously been exiled to the northern frontier as part of his punishment. Just as obviously the Franciscans in Mexico City had informed their New Mexico brethren about Oliden, a fascinating character of the Mexican Enlightenment. After migrating from his native Vizcaya, secular priest Gregorio Oliden had graduated from the Colegio de San Ildefonso before he was denounced to the Inquisition on 10 February 1785. On that occasion he was accused of heretical blasphemy because at the home of a sick friend he had disputed scripture on the Final Judgement when the dead would arise perfectly whole and free of infirmity, body, and soul. Oliden laughed and said how can you resurrect people who have had their bodies destroyed or eaten by wild animals?

Oliden had taken a very partisan stance in the conflict between the secular and regular clergy, especially on the question of who were better preachers. He was alleged to have insulted the Capuchins, sneering "these religious have no idea what they are saying." Gregorio was a choleric and blasphemous young priest. He had iconoclastic ideas on the nature of sin, holy images, and crucifixes. A mocking man, he liked to shock people. One witness said "he had a very bad mouth on him and his ideas were profane." He became scatological in the extreme in heat of argument, waving his private parts at people; saying that the treatises of St. Thomas Aquinas were old and out of date and good only to wipe dishes with; referring to Inquisitor Mier as señor mierda (fecal matter). A shocked tribunal decided to proceed against him "with the full force of the law."

Gregorio Oliden knew when to retreat. On 22 November 1785 he appeared before the Holy Office contrite and grovelling. He admitted the substance of many of the remarks attributed to him but tried to soften the circumstances. Yes, he said, his circle of friends always talked that way in a mocking manner, but they really did not mean anything by it. He claimed to have great respect for the Holy Office of the Inquisition and its mission. Surprisingly the tribunal let him off with a harsh reprimand, calling him a loose talker, ignorant, and intemperate who had the potential to lead others into error. When Gregorio pled for mercy, admitted his impudence, and promised to straighten up, he was allowed to make
a private abjuration of his errors. There the matter rested until 1793 when he got into trouble again, this time for espousing French Revolutionary philosophy.

The Reverend Gregorio Oliden had joined a discussion group in San Ángel. During May of 1793 he had met with friends in a San Ángel residence to discuss the uprising in France. Juan María Aysa, a cohort, who later denounced him to the Inquisition, told Oliden "your Basque friends are assemblists just like the French," to which Gregorio replied that the Estates General so far had not harmed the common people, only the king and his ministers. It had instituted good laws and had not undermined religion. The group discussed the deposition of a tyrant king, and Oliden had mouthed the cliches of popular sovereignty. Aysa claimed Oliden's remarks smacked of Rousseau's *Social Contract* and echoed Voltaire's ideas as well. He charged that Oliden had repeated John Wycliffe's views on the doctrine of tyrannicide, errors that had been condemned by the church. Manuel Antonio Alquibar was present at one of the meetings when the notorious Manuel Endérica (who was tried by the Inquisition for heresy and reading prohibited books in 1780) had come to discuss the French Revolution. Both Endérica and Oliden defended the French position and attacked the pope. Other witnesses said Oliden speculated that the Revolution might spread to Spain and a popular attack on the Spanish king might result. The tribunal gleaned from the testimonies that Gregorio Oliden had returned to his old ways. He was currently overly friendly with a woman named Petra Lequizamo. A witness saw them holding hands and going into her bedroom. This time the tribunal exiled Gregorio Oliden to the northern frontier. He went first to the bishopric of Durango where he soon received an appointment to be a secular priest in Santa Fe, thereby entering the minefield of New Mexico religious politics.

Governor Fernando de Chacon may have been the most effective enemy of the Franciscan friars in eighteenth-century New Mexico. He was committed to the idea that many of the kingdom's ills could be alleviated by transfer of the missions to secular clergy. His political alliance with the bishop of Durango was also in line with policies being espoused by the commandancy generalcy of the Interior Provinces in the first decade of the nineteenth century.
On 19 December 1797 Bishop Francisco Gabriel de Olivares y Benito informed the custodian of New Mexico that three secular priests were on the way to replace friars. One of these was don Gregorio Oliden who was to become curate of Santa Fe and visitor of the missions. Oliden had assumed his duties by March 1798 although there was some question whether the friars would recognize his jurisdiction. Meetings between the custos and the governor were acrimonious, but finally Chacón issued a decree to Francisco de Hozio on 19 April 1798: the Franciscans were to continue to administer outlying missions of Santa Fe while Oliden was to become pastor of the villa. Obventions were to be taken as usual but were to be divided with the secular pastor. On 30 May Hozio announced the appointment of Oliden both as pastor and visitor of the missions and charged the friars to cooperate. On the surface a modicum of civility was maintained. Behind the scenes all manner of disputes started over jurisdiction, obventions, tithes from the Indians. It appeared that a compromise might be reached when the custos and the governor agreed that for the time being New Mexico’s villas (Spanish settlements) were to be secularized while the friars remained in the Doctrinas or Indian parishes in the missions.

Very soon the attacks on Gregorio Oliden began. On 1 May 1798, Inquisition Commissary José de la Prada, stationed at Abiquiú, came into Santa Fe to take testimony from selected, probably carefully selected, settlers. It was alleged Oliden did not perform his priestly duties in administration of the sacraments. His Masses were “a farce,” tardy, and abbreviated ceremonies—not at all what the parishioners were accustomed to. Indeed Oliden had scoffed at the sacraments of marriage and extreme unction. He refused to baptize without charging exorbitant fees, causing “the settlers great sadness.” Prada told his superiors on the Inquisition tribunal “this is a poor province yet he [Oliden] has tried to charge too much.” He brought horror, confusion, and bitterness to the kingdom, Prada said, and he had the temerity to insult the commissary when questions about his administration were raised. María Rosalía Esquivel said when she confessed to Cura Oliden he seemed bored and cut her off impatiently as if her sins did not matter. She said Oliden never explained Christian doctrine as the OFM padres did, and
he refused to preach on feast days. Fray Buenaventura Merino gave testimony on the recent illness of Vicente Armijo who on the verge of death wished Oliden to confess him. Gregorio went to his house reluctantly and curtly, briefly, and with some derision, went through the motions. The testimonies of these and others were carefully used to contrast Oliden's conduct with that of the friars. Curate Gregorio Oliden did not last long in Santa Fe. By Fray Angelico Chavez's calculations he served only from March to October 1798 when he was removed.\(^59\) The commissary of the Holy Office had seen to the reopening of Oliden's file in Mexico City, and soon the Franciscans knew all about him. So much for the confidential nature of Inquisition files prescribed by canon law. Neither the bishop of Durango nor Governor Chacón wished to fight this particular battle in the secularization process. They were convinced that the commissary would cause trouble and extreme embarrassment to both of them if Gregorio Oliden were allowed to stay curate of Santa Fe and visitor of the missions of New Mexico.

Governor Fernando de Chacón continued his criticism of the Franciscan custody after the turn of the nineteenth century. John L. Kessell has studied Chacón's December 1804 "State of the Missions Report," which was a damning indictment of the friars. They gouged the citizenry and Indians alike, charging exorbitant fees for the sacraments. They were neglecting the spiritual care of the Indians, "abusing them in word or deed," and causing the natives to "look upon them with spite as their worst oppressors."\(^60\) Neither the inquisitorial procedures against his predecessor Governor Fernando de la Concha nor the process against Curate Gregorio Oliden triggered by the Franciscan commissaries could intimidate Governor Chacón. Belatedly the order learned that use of the Inquisition as a political weapon against the New Mexico governors was an outmoded and ineffective device.

Commissaries of the Holy Office continued to function in New Mexico until 1820. While there was still an attempt to police the moral fiber of the colony, the major task of the commissaries was to control the flow of subversive literature into New Mexico and Texas, tracts that illuminated the political and social philosophy of the great French and American revolutions. As early as the 1790s there was evidence of a thriving trade in prohibited books along
the Santa Fe Trail. Philadelphia, St. Louis, and New Orleans were the cities of origin. New Mexico Commissary Fray Joseph de Prada was cautioned about the influx in a specific circular sent to him on 19 October 1794. Because of the shortage of commissaries in New Mexico and Texas, and the long distances between their headquarters, curtailing smuggling was an almost impossible task. Many frontier libraries in New Mexico and Louisiana had books and pamphlets prohibited by the Inquisition, works of philosophy, theology, history, and politics. The New Mexico Holy Office appointed a special agent to censor books in 1795. Commissary Fray Ramón Antonio González was still attempting to control the book trade and the reading habits of New Mexicans as late as 1817.

The Inquisition records tend to show that there was much more continuity than change in New Mexico's history from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Scholes' views of the social structure and folk religion of the Indian population in the early period are quite similar to what the commissaries reported during the eighteenth century. Themes of church and state conflict over the progress of the missions continued after 1700, but church power was on the wane in the eighteenth century, and Franciscan commissaries of The Holy Office of the Inquisition could do little to reverse the process.

NOTES

5. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 540, exp. 5.
6. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 735, exp. 28.


11. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 553, exp. 75.
12. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 553, exp. 53.
15. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 849, exp. 22.
16. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 758, exp. 16.
18. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 932, exp. 44.

20. Simmons, Witchcraft, pp. 30–32.


23. Clark Calahan and Francisco Lomeli, Miguel de Quintana, Poeta Nuevo-mexicano Ante La Inquisición, Con Muestras de Su Obra (Albuquerque: Southwest Hispanic Research Institute, 1983).


27. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 1336, exp. 6.


33. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 952, exp. 23, r. 2.

34. Gustav Henningsen, "El Banco de Datos del Santo Oficio. Las Relaciones de Causas de La Inquisición Española," Boletín de La Real Academia de La Historia 174 (Cuaderno 3, 1977): 547–72. Henningsen's studies show that there were many more solicitantes in the New World than in the Iberian peninsula. Were they exiled there from Spain, or did the Americas lend itself to moral decline of many clergy?

36. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 950, exp. 5.


38. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 1049, exp. 11. This man was the same Menchero whom the previous commissary-custodian had investigated in 1748. See note 32 above. Montaño was later able to secure the appointment of Fray Manuel Zambrano as notary of the Holy Office after a bitter struggle with the vice-custos.


40. Adams, Tamarón, p. 18.


42. Adams, Tamarón, pp. 18–19.

43. Ángelico Chávez and Angelico Chavez, eds., The Missions of New Mexico, 1776. A Description by Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez with other Contemporary Documents (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1956).


45. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 1001, exp. 12. The Vélez Cachupín sorcery investigations are soon to be published by Richard E. Greenleaf.

46. Adams and Chavez, Domínguez, passim.


48. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 1153, exp. 6. Chávez, Archives, p. 254, indicates that Santa Cruz Pollanco had been posted to Santa Fe briefly in 1762.


53. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 1382, exp. 22.

54. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 1193, exp. 7.


56. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 1429, exp. 5.


58. Chávez, Archives, p. 56.


61. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 1389, exp. 2.

62. Incomplete lists of commissaries appointed to New Mexico and Texas are found in AGN, Historia, vol. 301, exp. 16, and vol. 43, exp. 24.

63. See Eleanor B. Adams, “Two Colonial New Mexico Libraries 1704, 1776,”

64. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 1353, exp. 13.
65. Chávez, Archives, p. 79.